

Accreditation of Study Programmes  
Assessment Report

**Institution:** Academy of Public Administration, Republic of Moldova

**Study programme:** Constitutional and Administrative Law

**Assessment committee:**

- |                              |   |  |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Aalt Willem Heringa (Chair)  | – | Professor of (Comparative) Constitutional and Administrative Law, Faculty of Law, Maastricht University, Holland               |
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**Coordinator:** Ms Tiia Bach, Assessment Coordinator, Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education, Estonia

**Dates of the assessment visit:** 22 May 2015

**Assessment committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA:** 6 July 2015

**Assessment committee received the comments of the institution under accreditation:** 22 July 2015

**Assessment committee approved the final version of component assessment with 4 votes in favour and 0 votes against.**

**Date:** 09 September 2015

**I Summary of the assessment (mark with 'X'):**

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
Study programme and its development			X
Teaching and learning		X	
Teaching staff		X	
Students			X
Resources		X	

**General introduction:**

The Academy of Public Administration (hereinafter referred to as APA), is a state higher education institution established in 1993 with the purpose of creating a state system of staff training and development for the state administration bodies and local self-government. The Academy operates as a national centre for promoting the state policy in the field of public administration, training civil service personnel as well as providing scientific and methodological support for the activity of public authorities.

APA provides education at the Master's level (2<sup>nd</sup> cycle) and Doctoral level (3<sup>rd</sup> cycle). It is the only higher education institution in Moldova that has got the right to conduct full-time as well as part-time studies, proceeding from the training needs of civil service personnel.

In the field of law, APA conducts studies on two master programmes: "Constitutional Law and Administrative Law" and "Anticorruption".

The professional master programme "Constitutional Law and Administrative Law", which is being evaluated, is a programme with the duration of 2 years for full-time studies and 2.5 years for part-time studies, with the total volume of 120 ECTS. Each academic year, student groups for full-time

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studies as well as part-time studies are formed. The programme is conducted by Law Sciences Chair, established in 1998, within the Department of Public Administration.

### Comments:

The programme has two kinds of students: regular MA students and civil servants. This would require adjusting the programme. Civil servants might require different courses and skills than regular master students. The present situation is complex from the perspective of intake and output. Master students do require other (level) courses than civil servants and vice versa. The fact that students with different backgrounds (and different bachelors) can sit in the same law courses may jeopardise the perspective of the expected level of the master course.

The Committee has noted that the hours studied by the students, combined with the teaching (class) hours, do not add up to the hours that are necessary to merit the 120 credits. It leads to the obvious question whether the learning objectives and specifically the academic features of the programme may be fully met and can lead to a justifiable recognition as a full-time programme. The courses, furthermore, reflect bachelor level knowledge.

The Committee has not found the objectives of the programme to be realized. The courses are rather basic and the research skills have appeared to the Committee to be largely absent. Therefore, the Committee also has its sincere doubts whether the programme truly trains for a PhD and the academic skills that doing a PhD entails.

For reasons of academic depth and research orientation the international comparability appears to us to be absent. Comparability might be present with programmes geared towards educating civil servants with relevant knowledge and skills, but in that respect the programme does not meet the EQF criteria and level necessary for an alleged master programme.

A structural process of collection and evaluation of courses and feedback from alumni and labour market is not in place, and therefore there is no clear evidence that the curriculum was set according to wishes and based upon an exchange of and with state organs.

The focus of the programme is too much on practice and practicality; there is an absence of true in-depth and critical analytical knowledge and related skills and an absence of an overall shared perspective on the programme and its goals and means.

The teaching methods of the staff are not very much oriented towards active learning of the students. In writing MA thesis students use outdated materials. The average grades of the students are unreasonably high. The implementation of the grading system does not make it possible to distinguish the students according to their knowledge acquired. The grades also create doubt about the level of courses and thesis. A reasonable explanation for the high grades is that the assessment levels and course levels are set too low for a true master programme.

The achievement of learning outcomes is not analysed. It is also noteworthy that the learning outcomes as set in the Plan of Education for the II cycle of vocational master programme are quite ambitious and it is not clear whether it is in reality possible to achieve these outcomes.

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Some steps have been taken to involve students in research and development activities. However, the teaching staff does not seem to have enough time to dedicate themselves to supervising the thesis and encouraging students to take part in research and development activities, since they work in several other jobs. The orientation of the staff towards research is insufficient.

There is a sufficient number of teaching staff for the programme; yet, in the Committee's opinion, the percentage of young members of the teaching staff does not ensure the sustainability of the programme in the long run. Although the teachers have access to international bibliographic databases, the course/module forms do not prove that they are using the international bibliographic databases for teaching their courses. There is a lack of motivation to improve foreign language skills because the majority of the staff are working in several institutions and do not have time for self-development. Visiting members of the teaching staff (including from foreign higher education institutions) are not involved in the teaching process of the programme under evaluation. So far, only public lectures with participation of ambassadors have been organised, but such lecturers are not incorporated in the teaching of the courses of the study programme.

Only a limited number of lecturers have participated in international networks. The plans of the Chair and individual teachers in terms of research activities are very abstract and do not help in directing, planning and monitoring them.

The admission and evaluation of academic progress are well regulated by internal acts. However, their practical application raises doubts. It appears that the academy has a privileged position compared to other universities as it can offer places funded by state budget to applicants who are not related to civil service, due to the high number of places funded by the state and the smaller number of recommendations/delegations coming from public administration authorities. Thus, there is a need of a more clear admission strategy in order to ensure some clarity with regard to categories of the candidates who can apply and a fair distribution of budget funded places.

The admission criteria include a specialty exam and evaluation of the IT and foreign language skills (English/French). However, only a few students could demonstrate foreign language abilities. The level set in this entrance exam may therefore be doubted.

The focus of the Academy is not on student mobility as such, but rather on short-term visits and internships. Insufficient attention is paid to the identification and prevention of academic fraud, and more efforts are needed for establishing efficient systems for career and psychological counselling. The dialog and cooperation with the employers also needs to be improved.

Financial stability and sustainability are certainly present based upon the past. However, when one looks at the immediate future and the necessary investments and challenges, doubts may be expressed with regard to necessary investments into areas such as international mobility of staff and students, and upgrading the present library resources.

The Academy has a well-equipped campus and facilities for providing studies in terms of the number of classrooms and lecture halls as well as technical equipment. However, it must be pointed out that the library lacks internationally relevant sources necessary for law education. The number of books is limited and scarce, specifically international English publications.

**Commendations:**

- The programme is offered in a well-equipped building with a great variety of spacious facilities and lecture rooms.

**Recommendations:**

- It is recommended to design a structural process of programme development and amendment with evaluations, input of employers, foreign input and student evaluations and to relate the programme clearly and more ambitiously to learning outcomes and programme objectives, and to upgrade the programme with more academic and theoretical substance. It is necessary to rethink the objectives and learning outcomes of the programme. It does not make sense to analyse the achievement of learning outcomes if the learning outcomes themselves are set randomly and without sufficient analyses.
- It is to be recommended that the courses were to be upgraded so as to include foreign materials, in-depth academic articles and analysis. Also methodology of legal research, focus on European law aspects for Moldova (legal approximation) ought to be included. For the legal professionals' sake skills such as legal drafting might be relevant.
- The Committee, furthermore, recommends splitting the programme for civil servants (those working already in public administration) and who want their knowledge and skills to be updated, on the one hand, and a master programme for students who have concluded their law bachelors on the other hand. The first programme may be tailor-made for those working in practice; the second has to be a true master programme.
- It is recommended to introduce a course for the teaching staff about modern and interactive teaching methods and to encourage them to use these in the teaching process.
- It is recommended to develop a strategy for improving the English language skills of the staff and students of APA to make them more competitive and give them a chance to use more up-to-date teaching materials in English.
- It is also recommended to work on didactical aspects and devise a true grading system which does distinguish between students and if necessary make the study load and substance more challenging and conducive to distinguish excellent students from average students.
- To foster participation in joint research projects, national and international, a strong policy is needed. Staff members must be stimulated also through Human Resources Management policies. A master programme must and ought to benefit from international research cooperation in order to be competitive.
- It is recommended to structurally build and implement foreign exchanges for students and staff.

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- Upgrade the library with access to foreign materials and to include these in syllabus of courses and in the thesis requirements.
- Financial resources must be found for a thorough upgrade of the library, international exchange of staff and students.

### Recommendations to the Ministry of Education:

- The institution has stated that the MA programme is mainly focused on the delegated/recommended persons by the public administration authorities and, indeed, the application requirements include the delegating/recommendation document issued by public administration authorities for both full-time and part-time studies. Nevertheless, for the year 2014, less than half of the students were recommended by public authorities. At the same time, most of the places are funded by state budget and only few students pay for their studies and part of the students with scholarships (state budget) are not employed by public authorities and have no connection with their activities – private sector, NGOs, unemployed, etc. This leads to the conclusion that the main focus of the programme is not on civil servants and persons recommended/delegated by public authorities. Likewise, the Academy has obviously a privileged position compared to other universities, as it can offer places funded by state budget to applicants who are not related to civil service, due to the high number of places funded by the state and smaller number of recommendations/delegations coming from public administration authorities. The Academy and the Ministry are recommended to assess and revise the admission strategy in order to ensure some clarity with regard to categories of the candidates who can apply and in order to achieve a fair distribution of state funded places.
- The Committee is of the opinion that the present Framework Plan adopted by the Ministry of Education is far too inflexible in terms of stipulating the volume of fundamental, specialised and optional courses, allowing the volumes of courses to be strictly 5/10/15 ECTS and subsequently one semester up to 6-2 courses/modules. It is strongly advisable to reconsider giving higher education institutions greater freedom to decide upon the volume of obligatory and optional courses in the programme, thereby expanding students' choices. Furthermore, institutions could be allowed to have courses with volumes bigger or smaller than 5 ECTS, depending on the content of the specific course, and not simply 5 ECTS in order to fulfil some formal requirements.
- The Committee is of the opinion that the requirement established by the state in terms of having a dormitory for *all* the students is superfluous and too expensive and should be revisited, since many students have their own abode. Instead of having its own dormitory, it could be considered to cooperate with other real-estate companies or proprietors offering accommodation. So is the requirement regarding the provision of medical service – it is outdated, too expensive, not efficient and, therefore, too much of a burden on small institutions and programmes with low funding.

**II Assessment areas and requirements**

1. STUDY PROGRAMME AND ITS DEVELOPMENT	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'			X
<p><b>Collected evidence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information from the Self-Evaluation Report of APA</li> <li>- Information received during the site visit and interviews</li> </ul>			
<p><b>General comments:</b></p> <p>According to the Ministry's requirements, all fundamental disciplines (minimum of 25 ECTS) must be obligatory and not optional. Presently, the fundamental disciplines (total 25 ECTS) include one optional course. It is recommended to make all the fundamental disciplines obligatory, without optional courses, and to introduce one more optional course for the Specialized disciplines, in order to fulfil the requirements of the Ministry.</p> <p>The Committee has noted that the hours studied by the students, combined with the teaching (class) hours, do not add up to the hours that are necessary to merit the 120 credits. It leads to the obvious question whether the learning objectives and specifically the academic features of the programme may be fully met and can lead to a justifiable recognition as a full-time programme.</p> <p>The Committee has not found the objectives of the programme to be realized. The courses are rather basic and the research skills have appeared to us to be largely absent. Therefore, the Committee also has its sincere doubts whether the programme truly trains for a PhD and the academic skills that doing a PhD entails.</p> <p>For reasons of academic depth and research orientation the international comparability appears to us to be absent. Comparability might be present with programmes geared towards educating civil servants with relevant knowledge and skills, but in that respect the programme does not meet the EQF criteria and level necessary for an alleged master programme.</p> <p>A structural process of collection and evaluation of courses, feedback from alumni and labour market is not in place, and therefore there is no</p>			

clear evidence that the curriculum was set according to wishes and an exchange of and with state organs.

Although the teaching staff is aware of the objectives of their own courses, they have not been thinking how their courses contribute to the achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of the whole study programme.

No foreign language materials are used, and lecturers primarily use textbooks and focus on practice skills. Thus, the programme is to a very large extent a practice oriented programme. The focus is on practice and much less, if not at all, on academic depth and analysis. This evidently relates to its focus as training programme for people with different bachelors working in a state or other public administration. However, the programme aims also at external, private students, and they form a substantial part of the intake. The Committee met with students and they were exclusively students who entered the programme in that capacity. That makes it however a 'double' programme. On the one hand, it is oriented to state employees, to train and educate them; on the other hand, it is supposed to be a programme equivalent to other law master programmes. However, the skills oriented to state employees make it less suitable for a full-fledged master programme for regular students. The category of state employees might require knowledge and practice oriented skills, whereas regular students will also require academic depth and knowledge which brings them forward. That aspect is not really present.

The programme admits student with law bachelors and students with other bachelors. That factor exacerbates the previous conclusions of a programme which is not a truly master programme. The differences in prior (legal) knowledge mean that the master courses do require also that all students are to be provided with basic (bachelor level) knowledge. It would be better if students with a non-law bachelor would have to take a programme in law before they may enter. The Committee notes that the depth and level of the master programme do not meet the minimum requirements of a full-fledged master programme as can be expected under Bologna standards.

The reasons to conclude to not being in conformity with the requirements lies in the factors of different intake, the focus on practice and practicality, the absence of true in-depth and critical analytical knowledge and related skills and the absence of an overall shared perspective on the programme and its goals and means. The courses, furthermore, reflect bachelor level knowledge.

Recommendations:

- Help the teaching staff to become more aware of the overall objectives of the study programme.
- It is to be recommended that the courses were to be upgraded so as to include foreign materials, in-depth academic articles and analysis. Also methodology of legal research, focus on European law aspects for Moldova (legal approximation) ought to be included.



<p>For the legal professionals' sake skills such as legal drafting might be relevant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Committee furthermore recommends splitting the programme for civil servants (those working already in public administration) and who want their knowledge and skills to be updated, on the one hand, and a master programme for law bachelors on the other hand. The first programme may be tailor-made for those working in practice; the second has to be a true master programme.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1.1. REQUIREMENT: A higher education institution regularly plans its development: the higher education institution has a development plan accompanied by an action plan to ensure sustainability both in the institution and in a given study programme. The implementation of the action plan is analysed and forms the basis for planning of the next development period.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The rather luxurious position of the programme with a monopoly on offering a programme for state officials may have led to a programme which appears to be less planned and based upon strategy and development plans. The Committee was however informed that a strategy does exist which is presently in the stage of a draft. Development of the programme will have a focus on skills, practice and deep and theoretical studies.</p>	
<p><b>1.2. REQUIREMENT: A study programme is authorized and functions in accordance with the normative acts in force.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The professional master programme "Constitutional and Administrative Law" is authorised in accordance with the normative acts in force. The programme is approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education no. 384 of 30 May 2008. According to this, the master programme is 120 ECTS, with the duration of 2 years for full-time studies and 2.5 years for part-time studies.</p> <p>The Framework Plan for higher education approved by the Order no. 455 of the Ministry of Education issued on June 3, 2011 (Framework Plan), establishes requirements for the master study plans. It is the requirement for the professional master programmes (120 credits) to be structured in the following way: Master thesis (30 ECTS), Internship (10 ECTS), Fundamental courses (25-35 ECTS), and Specialized courses (45-55 ECTS), among which up to 20% should be optional courses.</p> <p>The structure of the master programme "Constitutional Law and Administrative Law" is as follows: fundamental courses (5) – 25 ECTS; specialised courses (11) – 55 ECTS; Internship – 10 ECTS; and master thesis – 30 ECTS.</p> <p>The specialised courses include one optional discipline (out of two options) - 5 ECTS; Fundamental courses also include one optional discipline (out of two options) of 5 ECTS. Yet, according to the Ministry's requirements, fundamental disciplines must be obligatory and not optional. It is recommended to make all the fundamental disciplines obligatory, not optional, and to introduce one more optional for the Specialized</p>	

<p>disciplines, in order to fulfil the requirements of the Ministry.</p> <p>The Committee is of the opinion that the present Framework Plan adopted by the Ministry of Education is far too inflexible in terms of stipulating the volume of fundamental, specialised and optional courses, allowing the volumes of courses to be strictly 5/10/15 ECTS and subsequently one semester up to 6-2 courses/modules. It is strongly advisable to reconsider giving higher education institutions greater freedom to decide upon the volume of obligatory and optional courses in the programme, thereby expanding students' choices. Furthermore, institutions could be allowed to have courses with volumes bigger or smaller than 5 ECTS, depending on the content of the specific course, and not simply 5 ECTS in order to fulfil some formal requirements.</p>	
<p><b>1.3. REQUIREMENT: The title of a study programme is consistent with its content.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The title reflects the content: the courses deal with both constitutional law and administrative law.</p>	
<p><b>1.4. REQUIREMENT: The conduct of studies, including the student workload of independent work and internship, support achievement of the objectives of the study programme.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Committee has noted, as it did in many other cases, that the programme managers and staff are not really able to assess the amount of students' workload. That is not a part of the evaluations. In its discussions with staff and students the Committee has noted that the hours studied by the students, combined with the teaching (class) hours, do not add up to the hours that are necessary to merit the 120 credits. This may be explained by the fact that quite a few of the students have a (part-time/full-time) job next to being a student, but it leads to the obvious question whether the learning objectives and specifically the academic features of the programme may be fully met and can lead to a justifiable recognition as a full-time programme.</p> <p>The skills aspects of the programme, which the students have informed us about as features they appreciate, did not convince the Committee that they amount to academic skills at master level.</p> <p>APA has many cooperation agreements with institutions and organisations for carrying out internship. Internships support the studies and the achievement of learning outcomes of the programme for full-time students. Part-time students have already jobs and therefore there is no confidence that the regular jobs students have, are clearly linked to skills, competences and substance of the programme and may, therefore</p>	

count, as an internship in the master programme.

**1.5. REQUIREMENT: The objectives and learning outcomes of a study programme are in coherence with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The structure and content of the study programme is internationally comparable.**

Comments:

The Self-Evaluation Report describes that the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme are in coherence and internationally comparable. The reason for the compatibility, as explained, is that they contain highly specialized knowledge, specialized skills in the research domain amongst others. The Committee has not found these objectives to be realized in the programme. The courses are rather basic and the research skills have appeared to us to be largely absent.

International comparability poses a further issue. The question is “Comparable to what?” – to programmes for professionals in public administration; or comparable to equivalent university master programmes? For reasons of academic depth and research orientation that comparability appears to us to be absent. Comparability might be present with programmes geared towards educating civil servants with relevant knowledge and skills. But in that respect the programme does not meet the EQF criteria and level necessary for an alleged master programme.

The programme is to a very large extent a practice oriented programme. The focus is on practice and much less, if not at all, on academic depth and analysis. This evidently relates to its focus as training programme for people with different bachelors working in a state or other public administration. However, the programme aims also at external, private students, and they form a substantial part of the intake. The Committee met with students and they were exclusively students who entered the programme in that capacity. That makes it however a ‘double’ programme. On the one hand, it is oriented to state employees, to train and educate them; on the other hand, it is supposed to be a programme equivalent to other law master programmes. However, the skills oriented to state employees make it less suitable for a full-fledged master programme for regular students. The category of state employees might require knowledge and practice oriented skills, whereas regular students will also require academic depth and knowledge which brings them forward. That aspect is not really present.

The courses should also include, among others, much more foreign materials and methodology of legal research.

Recommendations:

- It is to be recommended that the courses were to be upgraded so as to include foreign materials, in-depth academic articles and analysis. Also methodology of legal research, focus on European law aspects for Moldova (legal approximation) ought to be included.

For the legal professionals' sake skills such as legal drafting might be relevant.

- The Committee furthermore recommends splitting the programme for civil servants (those working already in public administration) and who want their knowledge and skills to be updated, on the one hand, and a master programme for law bachelors on the other hand. The first programme may be tailor-made for those working in practice; the second has to be a true master programme.

**1.6. REQUIREMENT** The objectives, content and learning outcomes of the Master's study programme are clearly distinguishable from those of the Bachelor's study programme.

Comments:

It is – and some of the foregoing comments underline this conclusion – very much to be doubted whether the substance and the skills of the courses amount to master level courses instead of being bachelor level, practice courses. One of the reasons relates to the differences in intake (for part-time studies students are enrolled with Bachelor degrees from fields other than law); another aspect relates to the focus on practicality and readiness to use basic knowledge. The Committee has not found in the syllabi or in the conversations that the courses are indeed master level.

Recommendation:

- Distinguish between students who are coming from Law BA programmes and those coming with BA degrees in the fields other than law and thus lack prior basic knowledge in law. Such difference in intake should be levelled out for the students coming from other fields before starting the MA programme.

**1.7. REQUIREMENT:** Study disciplines of the study programme are presented in a logical succession.

Comments:

It has been stressed to the Committee that EU law was integrated in the curriculum. The Committee has noted, however, that the two courses dealing with those aspects are electives and that it cannot therefore be guaranteed that all students receive that elementary knowledge. Having asked for a philosophy or reasons underlying the present curriculum and the sequence of course and the reason why some courses are on the curriculum and others are not, a clear answer was not provided. Many titles of courses bear the title "Theory of ..." (e.g., "Theory of civil service and administrative acts"), but our probing has revealed that these courses also predominantly deal with positive law and practicalities. Some courses may even appear to be out of place such as the course on "Current issues of notary activity and civil acts", or on labour law (considering the name of the master programme).

The Committee does not deny the importance of civil servants having skills and knowledge in these domains, but the committee opines that

some of these courses are inappropriate in a master programme on constitutional and administrative law.

Recommendation:

- Adjust the programme in order to account for the different intake levels. Furthermore, ensure that regular master students do have their share of theory and academic depth. Academic depth and theory must be reflected in the substance of all courses and not solely in their names.

**1.8. REQUIREMENT: Development of a study programme takes into consideration the needs of the labour market.**

Comments:

The programme was set up for public administration/state officials and has the monopoly in doing so. The Committee has not been provided with evidence that the curriculum was set according to wishes of and an exchange with state organs. Furthermore, the programme also admits regular master students. In that respect, the Committee has not been informed that a structured feedback is taken into account.

**1.9. REQUIREMENT: Study programme development is a continuous process which, among others, involves feedback from students, employers and other relevant stakeholders.**

Comments:

The information received during the conversation with the management and students was somewhat conflicting. The management informed the Committee that students are asked for feedback about the teaching process, quality of studies and the content of the programme after each examination; the answers are analysed after each course. It was mentioned that there is a person who is responsible for sending out the questionnaires and making such analyses in the field law. Yet, the students maintained that they were not giving regular feedback after every course; general feedback is asked only once a year.

It was also confirmed during the conversation with the management that no questionnaires for receiving feedback on the curriculum have been sent to employers and no feedback has been received from them.

Thus, it can be concluded that a structural process of collection and evaluation of courses, feedback by alumni and labour market and professional insights is not in place.

Recommendation:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is necessary to develop a system for regular feedback from all relevant stakeholders – students, staff, and employers in order to develop the substance of the programme. Closer links with employers should be developed, used and maintained.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1.10. REQUIREMENT: The members of the teaching staff are aware of the objectives of a study programme and of their role in achieving these objectives.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>Staff is aware of their own courses and they do their utmost to make their own courses useful for the students and they are willing to meet students’ demands. However, an overall perspective is missing. There is no overall perspective on the skills to be taught, where and in what order, how and why. Each individual teacher tries to insert practice in their classes and courses, seemingly without an overall joint perspective being present or abided by, however. Courses are separated and demarcated and boundaries between courses and disciplines are never crossed, which, however, appears to be a necessary ultimate goal of any master programme.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help the teaching staff to become more aware of the overall objectives of the study programme.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1.11. REQUIREMENT: Study programme provides opportunities for further education at doctoral level.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Academy does have PhD programmes but not in law. Indeed the graduates may continue by doing a PhD wherever possible or relevant. It can be said that opportunities to continue studies on doctoral level are provided, and the Evaluation Report mentions that during the period of 2011-2014, three graduates of the master programme have continued their studies on the PhD programme in APA. Yet, the Committee has its sincere doubts – as explained at different occasions – whether the programme truly trains for a PhD and the academic skills, e.g. research skills that doing a PhD entails.</p>	

<b>2. TEACHING AND LEARNING</b>	<b>conforms</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>partially conforms to</b>	<b>does not conform to</b>
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	requirements	requirements	requirements
mark with 'X'		X	
<p><b>Collected evidence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Academy's website (<a href="http://aap.gov.md">http://aap.gov.md</a>)</li> <li>- Information from the Self-Evaluation Report of APA</li> <li>- Information received during the site visit and interviews</li> </ul>			
<p><b>General comments:</b></p> <p>The interviews with the teaching staff and students did not convince the Committee that the methods of the staff are very much oriented towards active learning of the students.</p> <p>The staff and students have access to electronic databases of legal literature; yet, in writing MA thesis students use outdated materials. There are almost no references to the materials in the English language and other foreign languages besides Russian.</p> <p>It is positive that the organization of internship is clearly regulated and there is a list of institutions where students can perform their internship. The average grades of the students are unreasonably high. The implementation of the grading system does not make it possible to distinguish the students according to their knowledge acquired.</p> <p>The management and teaching staff are aware of the public legislation about recognition of prior learning experience, but this legislation has not fully been implemented. However, prior work experience could be recognized as performing the internship.</p> <p>The achievement of learning outcomes is not analysed. It is also noteworthy that the learning outcomes as set in the Plan of Education for the II cycle of vocational master programme are quite ambitious and it is not clear whether it is in reality possible to achieve these outcomes, for example "depth knowledge of constitutional and administrative systems of different countries, being able to analyse and highlight common features and their particularities".</p> <p>Some steps have been taken to involve students in research and development activities. However, the teaching staff stated that they work in many other places besides APA. Because of that it is obvious that they do not have enough time to dedicate themselves to supervising the thesis and encouraging students to take part in research and development activities. Also, regarding the teaching staff themselves, the orientation to research is insufficient. There is no system of gathering feedback from the students about the satisfaction with the quality of supervision of the thesis.</p> <p><u>Recommendations:</u></p>			

- It is recommended to introduce a course for the teaching staff about modern and interactive teaching methods to encourage them to use these in the teaching process.
- It is recommended to develop a strategy for improving the English language skills of the staff and students of APA to make them more competitive and give them a chance to use more up-to-date teaching materials in English and to start implementing the strategy.
- Encourage the students and staff to search for more up-to-date literature and learning materials.
- Analyse the implementation of the grading system and give the teaching staff instructions about correct implementation of the system.
- Make the recognition of prior learning and work experience a common practice.
- It is recommended to revise the whole Constitutional Law and Administrative Law MA programme and to start from rethinking the objectives and learning outcomes of the programme. It does not make sense to analyse the achievement of learning outcomes if the learning outcomes themselves are set randomly and without sufficient analyses. Seek guidance in this respect from foreign benchmarks and examples of similar programmes.
- It is recommended to gather feedback from students about the satisfaction with the quality of supervision of master thesis and launch a course for the teaching staff on improving the competences of teaching, including the skills of supervising the thesis.
- Increase a research-based aspect in all courses and in the thesis, as well as in all syllabuses and teaching materials.

**2.1. REQUIREMENT: Study management is regulated, publicly available, and supports the achievement of learning outcomes. In course of study management development, the results of feedback surveys and the analysis of learning activities are taken into account.**

Comments:

Study management is regulated, but there is only limited access to the texts of the regulations on the website of APA. The feedback from students about the study process is gathered, but it is not well structured and it cannot be seen that the results are used for improving study management. According to the Rector, students are asked to give feedback about the teaching process, quality of studies and the content of course after each exam, but the students stated in their interview that only once a year general feedback is collected, not after each course.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended to publish all the regulations about study management adopted by the institution on the website of APA. It is recommended to think through the system of gathering feedback from the students and other stakeholders and to make it more systematic and detailed, gathering feedback about each course and to make the results of the feedback public to the concerned parties



in time and to take the results of the feedback into account in developing study management.	
<b>2.2. REQUIREMENT: Within the education process of study programme, efficient teaching strategies are applied (modern, interactive, teamwork-based, etc.) and oriented towards active learning of the students.</b>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the Self-Evaluation Report, all kinds of modern and interactive teaching methods are used in the teaching and learning process. At the same time, the interviews with the teaching staff and students did not convince the Committee that the methods of the staff are very much oriented towards active learning of the students. There appears not to be any coherence between different courses and the sharing of experiences is not a common practice. The Rector admitted that the financial resources of APA for self-development of the staff are very limited. The teaching staff during the teaching process primarily focuses upon the need to build the practical skills of the students.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is recommended to introduce a course for the teaching staff about modern and interactive teaching methods and to encourage them to use these in the teaching process.</li> </ul>	
<b>2.3. REQUIREMENT: Within the education process of study programme, up-to-date teaching materials are used.</b>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The vast majority of the books in the library of APA are outdated. The access to the more contemporary sources is gained through the electronic database set up by the consortium of Moldovan universities. According to the Head of the Library, APA is also a member of this consortium and for the membership fee, which is about EUR 1000 a year, gains access to the database. During the interviews, several staff members and students mentioned that, in addition to the Academy's library, they use the books from the relatively well-equipped Public Law Library. In writing their Master thesis, students use out-of-date materials; the majority of the references are to the sources published more than ten years ago, in several cases even much earlier. There are almost no references to the materials in the English language and other foreign languages besides Russian. One of the reasons for this may be insufficient foreign language skills of both staff and students.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is recommended to develop a strategy for improving the English language skills of the staff and students of APA to make them more competitive and give them a chance to use more up-to-date teaching materials in English and to start implementing the strategy.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>2.4. REQUIREMENT: Organisation of internship is clearly regulated, the requirements for the completion of internship are determined, the instructions for conducting the internship are available and the supervision of students in work environment is ensured.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>Organization of internship is clearly regulated; there are regulations approved by the Minister of Education and by APA Senate. The duration of internship is 8 weeks in total, conducted in two stages: 4 weeks in the second semester and 4 weeks in the third semester. During the internship, a supervisor from the faculty and a tutor from the institution of placement supervise each student. According to the Rector, each student has a specified programme for internship and for the completion of the internship. At the end of internship, the students has to present the agenda of internship (the list of tasks completed) and an evaluation written by the employer. One student studying at the programme has completed 2 weeks of internship in Romania. Some of the alumni claimed that there have been students who performed their internship in private companies.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended that APA takes more active role in finding the placements of internship to all students and to provide everybody with an internship place which is directly related to the study programme “Comparative Law and Administrative Law”.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.5. REQUIREMENT: The higher education institution has a network of partner organisations offering internship opportunities for students and supporting the achievement of learning outcomes of study programmes.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>There is a list of central and local public authorities, organizations and institutions in Moldova who enable APA students to perform internship, determined by the Government. According to the Self-Evaluation Report and the interview with the Rector, it is also possible to perform the internship in other institutions according to the request of the student and an agreement with this institution.</p>	
<p><b>2.6. REQUIREMENT: Assessment of learning outcomes of students is performed in accordance with the existing requirements. Assessment methodology is consistent with learning outcomes and includes feedback supporting student development.</b></p>	

Comments:

Assessment of learning outcomes of students is performed in accordance with the existing requirements set by the university. Learning outcomes are assessed during the semester by current evaluation and during the examination sessions through the final examination. According to the information presented by APA, the average grade for both the exams and the MA thesis was about 9.5 last year. Those grades are unusually high, taking into account that the grading system has “10” as the highest grade and “5” as the pass rate (lowest positive grade). It is also important to mention that the grading system used does not even formally conform to the ECTS grading scale, where “A” is the highest positive grade and “E” marks the pass rate. During the interviews, the staff could not give any understandable explanations about this situation and kept telling that the grades are that high because the students are so bright and experienced.

It is the point of view of the Committee that the master must be more challenging, more in depth and academic and with even higher standards to be set, also since students do not seem to work all hours related to the credits. It is the view of the committee that teaching and testing do not set high enough standards and do not distinguish between good, better and excellent students, since now expectations and challenges are set too low.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended to reset the grading system and the practice of implementing this system and give the teaching staff instructions about correct implementation of the system. The Committee opines that the high grades are caused by courses and program and thesis not to be as challenging as they ought to be (this argument is supported by the finding that students appear to have jobs as well), which finding leads to a restructuring of all courses and making them more challenging. In addition the teachers do not appear to appreciate that a program must also differentiate between students. Training in grading and assessment might be relevant as well.

**2.7. REQUIREMENT: The higher education institution recognizes prior learning and work experiences.**

Comments:

Prior work experience is recognized as performing the internship. According to the Self-Evaluation Report and the interviews with the Programme Manager and the teaching staff, the Academy is aware of the public legislation about recognition of prior learning experience, but there is no system of implementing it in APA. There are cases when subjects studied in other Moldovan universities have been recognized in APA upon the initiative of specific professors without further assessment of learning outcomes.

To have prior work experience recognized as performing the internship a student has to present the certificate about employment, the list of tasks fulfilled at the working place, the characterization by the employer and the report completed by the student about work experience,

<p>which are assessed by the Academy.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is recommended to implement the national legislation by creating a transparent and internationally comparable system of recognizing prior learning experience acquired abroad or in other Moldovan universities as fulfilling the study programmes in the Academy.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.8. REQUIREMENT: Systematic analysis of achievement of learning outcomes is performed and improvement measures are undertaken.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>During the visit the staff could not convince the Committee that they are aware of the learning outcomes of the Constitutional Law and Administrative Law MA programme as stated in the Education Plan. The achievement of learning outcomes is not analysed. It is also noteworthy that the learning outcomes as set in the Plan of Education for the II cycle of vocational master programme are quite ambitious and it is not clear whether it is in reality possible to achieve these outcomes, for example “depth knowledge of constitutional and administrative systems of different countries, being able to analyse and highlight common features and their particularities” or “propose and implement effective mechanisms of interaction between the branches of state power, forecasting constitutionalism development and evolution of public administration, issues on national mechanisms to safeguard and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms”. In the interviews the teaching staff claimed that they analyse the achievement of each particular course and take measures to improve the achievement.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is recommended to revise the whole Constitutional Law and Administrative Law MA programme and to start from rethinking the objectives and learning outcomes of the programme. It does not make sense to analyse the achievement of learning outcomes if the learning outcomes themselves are set randomly and without sufficient analyses.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.9. REQUIREMENT: Students are involved in research and development activities, the supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, applied projects, final thesis) is well organised and the satisfaction rate with the quality of supervision is high.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>During the visit of the Committee, the annual conference on theory and practice of public administration took place. APA has published several</p>	

books containing also articles by the Master students of Constitutional and Administrative Law. According to the Self-Evaluation Report, the conditions for the development of thesis are provided by method of guidance on developing master thesis, approved by the Senate of the University. During the interviews, the teaching staff stated that they work in many other places besides APA. Because of that it is obvious that they do not have enough time to dedicate themselves to supervising the thesis and encouraging students to take part in research and development activities. Also, regarding the teaching staff themselves, the orientation to research is insufficient. There is no system of gathering feedback from the students about the satisfaction with the quality of supervision of the thesis.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to gather feedback about the satisfaction with the quality of supervision from the students after they have defended their thesis and use this feedback for improving the skills of supervision of the teaching staff.
- It is recommended to launch a course for the teaching staff on improving the competences of teaching, including the skills of supervising the thesis.
- Increase a research-based aspect in all courses and in the thesis, as well as in all syllabuses and teaching materials.

3. TEACHING STAFF	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'		X	
<p><b>Collected evidence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CVs of teaching staff (Annex B14)</li> <li>- Academy's website (<a href="http://aap.gov.md">http://aap.gov.md</a>)</li> <li>- Information from the Self-Evaluation Report of APA</li> <li>- Information received during the site visit and interviews</li> </ul>			

**General comments:**

As there is no academic staff in younger age groups teaching in the programme, the distribution of full-time teaching staff by age and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff does not seem ensure the sustainability of the programme in the long run.

The interviews revealed that staff development methods are not planned in advance and are not implemented in a systemic way, but organized on ad-hoc basis, on proposals of different projects. Although the teachers have access to international bibliographic databases, the course/module forms do not prove that they are using the international bibliographic databases for teaching purposes. The trainings of English language were organized in 2014 for the teaching staff, but lecturers were not attending these trainings due to lack of motivation and because majority of them are working in several institutions and do not have time for self- development.

Visiting members of the teaching staff (including from foreign higher education institutions) are not involved in the teaching process of the programme under evaluation. So far, only public lectures with participation of ambassadors have been organised, but such lecturers are not incorporated in teaching of the study programme.

The majority of full-time teaching staff do not regularly develop their skills at foreign education institutions and participate in international networks. Only a limited number of lecturers have participated in occasional activities. Thus, the process is not systemic, but organised on ad hoc basis and financed only by cooperation projects/partners. It can also be said that that APA is not proactive in searching possibilities for the full-time teaching staff to develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions and participate in international networks.

Participation in the international scientific conferences and publication of scientific articles should be encouraged both by the Faculty and the Chair and the Faculty should find ways to fully cover the financial costs related to participation in forums, national and international scientific conferences. Although there are plans of the research activities of the Chair and also the plans of the individual teachers, analysis of the individual plans of the teaching staff by the Committee members revealed that the plans are very abstract and do not help in directing, planning and monitoring research activities.

Recommendations:

- Increase and update the staff development system with required and effective modules on languages and other relevant staff development modules.
- It could be considered to use video conferences/lectures for involving academic staff from foreign higher education institutions in the

<p>teaching process. In addition, APA must set in place a strategy and policy about staff exchange and mobility. Visiting staff will also contribute to reflections about the curriculum, modes of delivery and other didactical aspects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in possibilities for staff to upgrade teaching skills abroad and to learn from foreign experiences. Make this also part of Human Resource Management policy.</li> <li>To foster participation in joint research projects, national and international, a strong policy is needed. Staff members must be stimulated also through Human Resource Management policies. A master programme must and ought to benefit from international research cooperation.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3.1. REQUIREMENT: The number and qualification of full-time teaching staff complies with the requirements established by legislation. At least 60% of the study programme is covered by full-time staff. 100% of full-time staff involved in the study programme have PhD degree or equal.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Self-Evaluation Report, the CVs of the teaching staff and the interviews confirms that the number and qualification of full-time teaching staff complies with the requirements established by legislation. The Self-Evaluation Report and its Annexes B13 and B14 provide information on 18 teaching staff members involved in implementation of the Constitutional Law and Administrative Law master programme. During the meetings with the Acting Rector and the Head of Law Sciences Chair it was stated that 8 teaching staff members are involved in the implementation of the study programme; 4 of them are employed full-time and are members of the Law Sciences Chair, other 4 full-time staff are from other chairs of the Academy. Considering that information provided in the Self-Evaluation Report and in Annexes B13 and B14 are correct, 8 out of 18 lecturers have workload in the Academy 1.00 and bigger, all of them hold a PhD degree.</p>	
<p><b>3.2. REQUIREMENT: Distribution of full-time teaching staff by age, and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff, ensures the sustainability of studies in a higher education institution and a study programme.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Self-Evaluation Report provides information that the average age of the lecturers teaching in the master programme is 50 years. The average age of the lecturers employed full-time is 48; 2 of them are younger than 40 years (25%), 2 are between 40-50 (25%) and 4 are older than 50 (50%). As there is no academic staff in younger age groups teaching in the programme, the distribution of full-time teaching staff by age and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff does not seem to ensure the sustainability of the programme in the long run.</p>	
<p><b>3.3. REQUIREMENT: The total number and qualification of teaching staff is – based on their responsibilities, workload and the</b></p>	

<p><b>number of supervised students – sufficient and adequate for achieving the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programmes at MA level.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Self-Evaluation Report, the CVs of the teaching staff and the interviews confirmed that the total number and qualification of teaching staff is sufficient and adequate for achieving the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme at MA level. According to the information provided, a teacher has, on average, supervision activities for 3 master students (full-time studies) and 8 master students (part-time studies) per year. Meeting with lecturers confirmed this data. Yet, the interview with students revealed that students’ individual work is less than is foreseen in the course programmes and is required for 120 ECTS credit.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Match students' workload with the 120 credits for this programme.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3.4. <u>REQUIREMENT:</u> The members of the teaching staff have an adequate teaching competence and improve their teaching methods.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Self-Evaluation Report (p. 15, B14) informs that teaching staff on this programme have adequate teaching qualifications, 70% having teaching experience for over 20 years, and that in the period of 2010-2014 teachers attended the scientific-practical seminars, scientific conferences and symposiums conducted outside the Republic of Moldova. The interviews with students and teaching staff provided information that some lecturers are occasionally using interactive teaching methods, but the Committee was not convinced that, in general, the methods of the staff are very much oriented towards active learning of the students. There is not sufficient information that all of them (18) improve their teaching methods regularly. According the information provided, only 4 lecturers have participated in the projects related with academic/teaching issues (O.Balan, S.Goriuc, I.Tipa, I.Dulschi).</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important for APA to create a policy and involve staff members to implement this policy with regard to training courses on teaching and didactics. This can take many forms, but it is crucial that such a course be available and participated in fully by all staff members.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3.5. <u>REQUIREMENT:</u> The staff development system is effective: the members of the teaching staff have opportunities for self-improvement, staff development methods are applied by the higher education institution.</b></p>	



Comments:

According to the Self-Evaluation Report (p. 15; A9, B15), APA creates conditions for professional development of teachers, creating appropriate conditions, providing access to international bibliographic databases, encouraging the participation of teachers in international cooperation programs, internships, research, national and international conferences and scientific symposia. However, the interviews revealed that staff development methods are not planned in advance and are not implemented in a systemic way, but organized on ad-hoc basis, on proposals of different projects. The head of the Law Science Chair informed that the courses on IT technologies and teaching methods for the teaching staff are organized once a year, but could not confirm this information with training plans or trainings curricula. Although the teachers have access to international bibliographic databases, the course/module forms do not prove that they are using the international bibliographic databases for teaching purposes. The trainings of English language were organized in 2014 for the teaching staff, but lecturers were not attending these trainings due to lack of motivation and because majority of them are working in several institutions and do not have time for self- development. These shortcomings do not allow to consider the staff development system effective.

Recommendation:

- Increase and update the staff development system with required and effective modules on languages and other relevant staff development modules.

**3.6. REQUIREMENT: Visiting members of the teaching staff (including from foreign higher education institutions) are involved in teaching in a study programme.**

Comments:

The Self-Evaluation Report and the meetings confirmed that visiting members of the teaching staff (including from foreign higher education institutions) are not involved in the teaching process of the MA programme under evaluation. So far, only public lectures with participation of ambassadors have been organised, but such lecturers are not incorporated in the courses of the study programme. The Self-Evaluation Report and the interviews confirmed that this requirement is not fulfilled.

Recommendation:

- It could be considered to use video conferences/lectures for involving academic staff from foreign higher education institutions in the teaching process. In addition, APA must set in place a strategy and policy about staff exchange. Visiting staff will also contribute to reflections about the curriculum, modes of delivery and other didactical aspects.

<p><b>3.7. REQUIREMENT: The members of the full-time teaching staff of a higher education institution regularly develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions and participate in international networks.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the Self-Evaluation Report (p. 16), the teaching staff develop their skills in higher education institutions abroad, within the financial possibilities of the APA. The CVs of the teaching staff and the interviews confirmed that the majority of full-time teaching staff do not regularly develop their skills at foreign education institutions and participate in international networks (eg, University Collaboration Network at the Black Sea-UNIVER-SEA.NET). Only a limited number of lecturers participated in occasional activities/networks. Thus, this process is not systemic, but organised on ad hoc basis and financed only by cooperation projects/partners. Meeting with the specialists of the International Relations Department revealed that APA is not proactive in searching possibilities for the full-time teaching staff to develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions and participate in international networks. Occasional participation cannot be considered as regular, which is requested for full compliance of this requirement.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in possibilities for staff to upgrade teaching skills abroad and to learn from foreign experiences. Make this also part of Human Resource Management policy.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3.8. REQUIREMENT: Teaching staff are involved in national and international research projects and participate in forums, national and international scientific conferences.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Self-Evaluation Report, the CVs of the teaching staff and the interviews confirm that APA is regularly organising annual conferences „Teoria și practica administrării publice“, which have taken place every year starting from 2010, and is publishing materials of these conferences. Also, the majority of the teaching staff are publishing articles in the Revista Administrarea Publică. Yet, the majority of the teaching staff are not involved in international research projects and do not participate in international scientific conferences outside of Moldova. According to the Self-Evaluation Report (p. 16; A9, B15), APA is not only concerned about the research of the teaching staff and increasing the quality of the teaching process, but also exploiting this research and identify partnerships with beneficiaries of the research results. Annexes provides information on the involvement of the teaching staff of the study programme in national and international scientific conferences, but there is no information on the involvement of teaching staff in international research projects, and the meeting with the lecturers confirmed the lack of such projects. During the meeting with teaching staff it was stated that lecturers need to cover the financial costs related to participation in the international scientific conferences and publication of scientific articles. The proposals to participate in forums, national and international scientific conferences are not coming from the Faculty or the Chair, but from the lecturers themselves. All this suggests that the role of the</p>	

Chair in organising lecturers' scientific activities should be more active and financial costs of lecturers' participation in forums and in national and international scientific conferences should be fully covered by the Faculty.

Recommendation:

- In order to foster participation in joint research projects, national and international, a strong policy is needed. Staff members must be stimulated also through Human Resource Management policies. A master programme must and ought to benefit from international research cooperation.

**3.9. REQUIREMENT: Research activities of the teaching staff are planned and monitored efficiently.**

Comments:

There are plans of the research activities of the Chair and also the plans of the individual teachers, but interviews revealed that research activities of the teaching staff are not planned and monitored efficiently. It was explained that lecturers are developing their annual work plan, which includes pedagogical and research activities, and at the end of the year the reports on their implementation are presented. If a member of the teaching staff is not fulfilling activities, foreseen in their plan, the Rector can reduce the salary (the part for research activities), but concrete examples of such involvement by the Rector were not presented. Analysis of the individual plans of the teaching staff revealed that these plans are very abstract and do not help in directing, planning and monitoring research activities (for example, it has been written: "participation in the conference organised by APA", "write the article").

Recommendation:

- The aspect of research activities also requires a strong and consequential Human Resource policy with annual feedback and checks. Planning is one, execution is another thing, as well as the alignment of research to match with the programme, and the assessment of the quality of the output.

4. STUDENTS	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'			X

**Collected evidence:**

- Regulation on the organization of the admission to Master studies, 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle which was approved by the Senate of the Academy on 10 July 2014 ([http://aap.gov.md/regulamente/R\\_admit\\_14.pdf](http://aap.gov.md/regulamente/R_admit_14.pdf))
- Information on the academy's website on the admission process ([http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=252&Itemid=142&lang=ro](http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=252&Itemid=142&lang=ro))
- Contingent of the MA programme (Annex A.7)
- Number of enrolled students for all MA programmes, full-time/part-time, budget/self-paid (available during the visit)
- Cooperation agreements with foreign universities from Romania, Turkey, Poland (business and economics), Georgia (cooperation agreements available during the visit)
- Regulation on the activity of the Senate published on the academy's website ([http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=110&Itemid=195&lang=ro](http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=110&Itemid=195&lang=ro))
- Members of the Senate ([http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=109&Itemid=194&lang=ro](http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=109&Itemid=194&lang=ro))
- Guidelines for elaboration of Master thesis ([http://aap.gov.md/masterat/indrumar\\_tm\\_14.pdf](http://aap.gov.md/masterat/indrumar_tm_14.pdf))
- Results of the admission process for 2014 ([http://aap.gov.md/admitere/14/WEB\\_Buget%202014.pdf](http://aap.gov.md/admitere/14/WEB_Buget%202014.pdf))
- Information from the Self-Evaluation Report of APA
- Information received during the site visit and interviews

**General comments:**

The admission and evaluation of academic progress are well regulated by internal acts. However their practical application raises doubts. It appears that the academy has a privileged position compared to other universities as it can offer places funded by state budget to applicants who are not related to civil service, due to high number of places funded by the state and smaller number of recommendations/delegations coming from public administration authorities. Thus, there is a need of a more clear admission strategy in order to ensure some clarity with regard to categories of the candidates who can apply and a fair distribution of budget funded places.

The admission criteria include a specialty exam and evaluation of the IT and foreign language skills (English/French). However, only a few students could demonstrate foreign language abilities.

The focus of the Academy is not on student mobility as such, but rather on short-terms visits, internships. The awareness about the mobility

programmes among students is rather vague and more efforts should be made for providing more information to students about various opportunities.

Insufficient attention is paid to the identification and prevention of academic fraud, and more efforts are needed for establishing efficient systems for career and psychological counselling. The dialog and cooperation with the employers also needs to be improved. Currently, the academy has no platforms of cooperation with the labour market and no tracking mechanism for monitoring the career development of the graduates. The drop-out rate can be as high as 25%.

Recommendations:

- Assess and revise the admission strategy in order to ensure some clarity with regard to categories of the candidates who can apply and a fair distribution of budget funded places.
- Improve the foreign language skills of the students which are needed by the public administration authorities and for research activities.
- Explore the possibilities under the current cooperation agreements, expand the cooperation relationships to other foreign universities or related institutions from EU countries and establish a unit responsible for mobility in order to raise the level of information and awareness among students.
- Establish well-organized and efficient systems for career and psychological counselling and develop a more close cooperation relationship with the labour market.
- Pay due attention to detection and prevention of academic fraud and develop a database and a anti-plagiarism soft-ware.
- Establish an efficient tracking mechanism on the employment rate and career development of its graduates and create a formal Alumni association.
- Ensure the accuracy of the information on the drop-out rate which will facilitate planning adequate measures for reducing the high drop-out rate.

**4.1. REQUIREMENT: The admission requirements for student applicants are based on qualities necessary for completing the study programme. The admission of students is performed by procedures stipulated in the normative acts.**

Comments:

The admission requirements are established by the national legal framework (Government Decision no 1455 of 24.12.2007 on the organisation

of the Master studies) and the internal Regulation on the organisation of the admission to Master studies (2<sup>nd</sup> cycle), which was approved by the Senate of the Academy on 10 July 2014 ([http://aap.gov.md/regulamente/R\\_admit\\_14.pdf](http://aap.gov.md/regulamente/R_admit_14.pdf)).

The information on the academy’s website is detailed and sufficient and the results of the admission process are also published ([http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=252&Itemid=142&lang=ro](http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=252&Itemid=142&lang=ro)).

The Academy of Public Administration is the only institution allowed to organise both full-time and part-time Master studies, and it does not have studies at 1<sup>st</sup> cycle, bachelor level. This is due to the fact that many of the students are already employed civil servants. Based on the information available in Annex A.7 about the student numbers, it can be observed that most of the students are enrolled for the part-time studies. Currently, the programme has 59 students enrolled for the first year; 17 of them are studying as full-time students and 42 as part-time (Document on the numbers of enrolled students for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year available onsite).

The representatives of the Academy explained that the MA programme is mainly focused on the delegated/recommended persons by the public administration authorities and, indeed, the application requirements include the delegating/recommendation document issued by public administration authorities for both full-time and part-time studies. Nevertheless, the numbers and the evidence collected during the interviews do not confirm this approach. For example, for the year 2014, less than half of the students were recommended by public authorities (Annex 7). At the same time, most of the places are funded by state budget and only few students pay for their studies (Document on the numbers of enrolled students for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year available onsite) and part of the students with scholarships (state budget) are not employed by public authorities and have no connection with their activities – private sector, NGOs, unemployed, etc. This leads to the conclusion that the main focus of the programme is not on civil servants and persons recommended/delegated by public authorities. Likewise, the Academy has obviously a privileged position compared to other universities, as it can offer places funded by state budget to applicants who are not related to civil service, due to high number of places funded by the state and smaller number of recommendations/delegations coming from public administration authorities. The Academy and the Ministry of Education are recommended to assess and revise the admission strategy in order to ensure some clarity with regard to categories of the candidates who can apply and a fair distribution of state funded places.

The admission criteria include a specialty exam and evaluation of the IT and foreign language skills (English/French). However, only a few students could demonstrate foreign language command.

Recommendation:

- Improve the foreign language skills of students which are needed by the public administration authorities and for research activities.

**4.2. REQUIREMENT: The counselling system of students (including study, career and psychological counselling) is planned/targeted and effective.**

Comments:

The Academy does not have in place systems for career guidance and psychological counselling. The Head of Law Sciences Chair informed that the institution may provide some guidance, but employment opportunities mainly come from the internship places and students that are already employed in public administration. The management of the university informed that about 40%-50% of MA students are already employed and there is no real need for career guidance. Nevertheless, the numbers presented in Annex 7 about student numbers indicate that only between 5%-15% of the full-time students are working in the area related to law or public administration. Likewise, the Committee could not identify a cooperation platform between the academy and employers: no questionnaires, no meetings. It appears that the academy is not offering any support for career developing and the system relies on the random offers coming from the public administration authorities.

Recommendation:

- The academy is recommended to establish a well-organised and efficient system for career and psychological counselling.

**4.3. REQUIREMENT: Students are provided with internal and external mobility opportunities.**

Comments:

The Academy has several cooperation agreements with foreign universities/academies in Romania, Turkey, Poland (business and economics), and Georgia, which could serve as a basis for students' international mobility (cooperation agreements available during the visit). However, the focus of the Academy is not on the mobility as such, but rather on short-terms visits, internships, etc. – groups of 4-5 students or mixed groups of students/teachers for a period of time up to 2 weeks. The expenses for the visits are covered by the extra budget funds of the Academy or by the partner universities/projects. This was confirmed by the students and teaching staff whom the Committee met.

All in all, awareness about the mobility programmes among students was rather vague and more efforts should be made for providing more information to students about various opportunities.

No proofs could be found on the internal mobility opportunities and on cooperation activities with other national higher education institutions.

Recommendation:

- The academy is recommended to explore the possibilities under the current agreements, expand the cooperation relationships to other foreign universities or equivalent institutions from EU countries and establish a unit responsible for mobility in order to raise the level of information and awareness among students.

**4.4. REQUIREMENT: Students participate in international mobility programmes. The percentage of students participating in**

<p><b>student mobility is stable or growing.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Self-Evaluation Report informs (p. 17) that the students of the MA programme in Constitutional Law and Administrative Law did not want to apply for several mobility opportunities because the field of studies was related to public administration and not law. The Committee learned, however, that these opportunities related to short-term visits/internships and not mobility as such. The students and teaching staff whom the Committee met informed that most of the students are interested in employment, graduation, and career rather than mobility opportunities.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The academy is recommended to encourage students to participate more actively in mobility programmes.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4.5. REQUIREMENT: Students are involved in the decision-making process at different levels of the higher education institution.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>Students have their representatives in the Senate and are invited to the meetings of the Departments when issues related to the quality assurance are discussed (information from the Report on page 18). According to the regulation on the activity of the Senate published on the academy's website (<a href="http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=110&amp;Itemid=195&amp;lang=ro">http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=110&amp;Itemid=195&amp;lang=ro</a>), the students (PhD and Master) are represented in a proportion of 20%-25% out of the total number. However, out of the total of 22 members of the Senate, only 2 are students (one PhD and one Master student) and that is about only 9% out of the total, which is significantly less than the minimum normative requirement (List of the members of the Senate – <a href="http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=109&amp;Itemid=194&amp;lang=ro">http://aap.gov.md/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=109&amp;Itemid=194&amp;lang=ro</a>).</p> <p>Students had limited awareness about their representation in the Senate and could not provide examples where students' proposals were submitted/discussed in the Senate. The Committee was informed that any proposals would be rather discussed with the teaching staff/chair, etc.</p>	
<p><b>4.6. REQUIREMENT: A system has been established for the detection and prevention of academic fraud.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Academy has no system in place for detection and prevention of plagiarism. The management of the Academy informed that some offers</p>	



have been submitted, but they were considered too expensive. Also, the academy has no internal database, although the theses are also presented in electronic format. The teaching staff informed that tools like google search or access to other databases (PhD) may be used for checking plagiarism of the Master thesis. Such checks resulted with identification of some plagiarism cases and the students had to improve the content of their thesis. Nevertheless, the main strategy relies on mutual responsibility of the coordinators and students for originality of the content and the guidelines for writing the Master thesis. Students are informed about the rules established by the guidelines and these are available on the academy's website. Nevertheless, prevention of academic fraud did not appear to be a key priority of the Academy.

([http://aap.gov.md/masterat/indrumar\\_tm\\_14.pdf](http://aap.gov.md/masterat/indrumar_tm_14.pdf)).

The academy informed about the plans to participate in an anti-plagiarism project that will be supported by the Government and it is strongly encouraged to do so and to pay due attention to detection and prevention of academic fraud.

No examples were given when students were expelled due to cheating during exams. However students admitted that they have tried or did cheat.

**4.7. REQUIREMENT: Higher education institution has a tracking mechanism of graduates' employment and is monitoring the evolution of graduates' career.**

Comments:

The tracking mechanism relies on the information received by the public authorities about the delegated/recommended students. However, Annex 7 shows that only 5%-15% of the full-time students are employed by public administration authorities. This means that the Academy has only limited information. Moreover, there is no cooperation platform with the employers that could provide some information. The Committee was informed about an Alumni association; however, it appears that it was not formally established and relies on personal contacts.

Recommendation:

- The Academy is recommended to establish an efficient tracking mechanism on the employment and career development of its graduates and create a formal Alumni association and a sound platform for cooperation with the labour market.

**4.8. REQUIREMENT: The competitiveness of the graduates of a study programme is demonstrated by employment rate according to obtained qualification; unemployment rate; employment rate in other fields than the one studied within the programme.**

Comments:

The Self-Evaluation Report (p. 18) indicates that the employment rate is about 61% for the full-time students and 88% for the part-time

students. At the same time, the Committee has been informed that about 40%-50% of the MA students are already employed. This means that the employment rate is improved with about 10%-20% after graduation. The rate does not appear to be high and there are doubts regarding the accuracy of the provided information in the absence of a tracking mechanism. The competitiveness of the MA programme relies, in principle, on the fact that a certain percentage of students are already employed, meaning that they are either employed by the public authorities, who have delegated them to study in APA, or have been offered employment opportunities during their internships. Students, alumni and employers spoke highly about graduates' competences and the quality of the MA programme.

**4.9. REQUIREMENT: There is a system in place for monitoring academic progress. Graduation of students per each year meets the legal requirements. Effective measures are implemented to reduce the drop-out rates.**

Comments:

The system for monitoring academic progress is based on the internal Regulation on the organization of the admission to Master studies (2<sup>nd</sup> cycle), which was approved by the Senate of the Academy on 10 July 2014.

([http://aap.gov.md/regulamente/R\\_admit\\_14.pdf](http://aap.gov.md/regulamente/R_admit_14.pdf)). The grades are predominantly 9s and 10s, however the results of the admission process indicate that the successful applicants received also 7s for the admission exams.

([http://aap.gov.md/admitere/14/WEB\\_Buget%202014.pdf](http://aap.gov.md/admitere/14/WEB_Buget%202014.pdf)).

The Self-Evaluation Report and Annex A7 provide information on the drop-out rate. It is said that the rate is 7-8% for the full-time students and 8-9% for part-time students. However, according to the numbers presented in Annex A7, the drop-out rate can be as high as 25%. The Academy claims that the main reasons for the students' decision to leave their studies are social and economic issues, including lack of sufficient financial resources to pay for the studies. Other reasons behind the drop-out cases are: students' own initiative, transfer to another institution, decision to go abroad, and poor academic progress. The Academy claims that each case is dealt with individually and a few things can be done when the reasons for drop-out are, for example, a decision to leave the country or poor academic performance.

Recommendation:

- It appears that the Academy has no accurate information about the drop-out rate and it is recommended to enhance the system in order to ensure its accuracy and plan adequate measures for reducing the high drop-out rate.

5. RESOURCES	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'		X	
<p><b>Collected evidence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information from the Self-Evaluation Report of APA</li> <li>- Tour of the facilities during the site visit and information received during the interviews</li> </ul>			
<p><b>General comments:</b></p> <p>Financial stability and sustainability are certainly present based upon the past. However, when one looks at the immediate future and the necessary investments and challenges, doubts may be expressed with regard to necessary investments into areas such as international mobility of staff and students, and upgrading the present library resources. Decreasing numbers of enrolled students may also indicate less income to the budget of the Academy.</p> <p>The Academy, currently, does not provide medical service for its students. However, the Committee is of the opinion that both requirements established by the state - the requirement to have a dormitory and provide medical service - seem to be outdated, superfluous (many students have their own abode), too expensive (specifically concerning the requirement to offer medical services), not efficient, and therefore too much a burden on small institutions and programmes with low funding.</p> <p>The Academy has a well-equipped campus and facilities for providing studies in terms of the number of classrooms and lecture halls as well as technical equipment (video projectors, digital boards, and computers). Students have possibilities for independent work both in the main building and the library. Those who wish can apply for a room in a dormitory adjacent to the main building. However, it must be pointed out that the library lacks internationally relevant sources necessary for law education. The number of books is limited and scarce, specifically international English publications.</p> <p><u>Commendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The university campus is situated in a beautiful environment. Some of the facilities for teaching and learning seem to be recently renovated; they have the adequate capacity considering the number of students and are well equipped with IT solutions and other tools necessary for conducting studies.</li> </ul>			

<p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial resources must be found for a thorough upgrade of the library, international exchange of staff and students.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5.1. REQUIREMENT: The financial resources of a higher education institution are adequate for conducting studies, development activities related to studies and supporting the development of the teaching staff.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The budget is relatively stable because of the mission of the Academy and the aim to provide a programme for state officials. However, the current resources do not really allow for investments in domains such as international mobility. The Committee has doubts about the possibilities for the Academy to achieve its objectives with the past and present revenue. Resources must be found for a thorough upgrade of the library, international exchange of staff and students. These issues will require huge investments, which will be hard to deliver, also considering an expected decrease in students. Furthermore, the circumstance that many staff members also have other jobs, and that many students also study part-time, make that the creation of an academic atmosphere is complicated and so is the execution of research and the students' involvement in research.</p>	
<p><b>5.2. REQUIREMENT: Trends in the number of students and graduates, and the budget of a higher education institution in the last three to five years indicate sustainability.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The numbers of admitted students to full-time studies have been rather stable over the past 5 years: 2010 – 16 students; 2011 – 18; 2012 – 21; 2013 – 19; 2014 – 20). However, the numbers of students enrolled for part-time studies have shown more instability and decline: 2010 – 48; 2011 – 60; 2012 – 60; 2013 – 34; 2014 – 40. Just recently, a new master programme “Anticorruption” was open in APA, which has been very popular among students, and this has been seen as one of the reasons for the decrease of enrolments for the Constitutional Law and Administrative Law programme.</p> <p>The incoming revenues for the past three years have been rather stable, even somewhat increased from 10512 MDL in 2012 to 12207 MDL in 2014; the operating expenses have also increased from 10126 MDL in 2012 to 12350 MDL in 2014; staff costs in 2014 formed approximately 63% of the total budget, while in 2013, the staff costs were 69% of the budget, and in 2012 nearly 77%.</p>	

From the information presented by the institution it may be concluded that the income of the entire institution has been relatively stable. Yet, it is unfortunate that staff costs have decreased and some years show some deficit in the budget.

Financially, APA is a sustainable institution and should be able to run the programme with these numbers of students, but there is a need to make investments into updated library resources, staff development, mobility, etc.

**5.3. REQUIREMENT: Teaching and learning environments have been developed according to the teaching and learning objectives, include all facilities necessary for conducting studies in a given study programme and are of adequate capacity considering the number of students (auditoriums, seminar rooms, laboratories, rooms for students independent work and recreation, video projectors, internet etc.).**

Comments:

The Academy has the total are of 11,765.8 m<sup>2</sup>, including 6099.5 m<sup>2</sup> for teaching and research. The teaching and learning environment has the adequate capacity in terms of classrooms for seminars and lectures. Teaching is conducted in 35 classrooms/halls, of which 15 are equipped with video projectors and 2 are equipped with digital boards; classrooms have opportunities for video conferencing. There are 4 computers classes with 60 seats. The Academy has an auditorium (amphitheater) with 200 seats (used for larger student groups and various meetings). The APA library is equipped with computers and places for students' independent work. The Academy also has a cafeteria located in an area of 594.6 m<sup>2</sup> with 200 seats.

Commendation:

- The university campus is situated in a beautiful environment. Some of the facilities for teaching and learning seem to be recently renovated; they have the adequate capacity considering the number of students and are well equipped with the necessary tools for conducting studies.

**5.4. REQUIREMENT: Both the conduct of studies and other activities of a higher education institution are supported by up-to-date information technology solutions, including the study information system, e-learning opportunities, and communication portals for students and teaching staff.**

Comments:

The studies are supported with the necessary IT solutions (interactive boards, video conferencing opportunities) and other tools (projectors, screens etc.). According to the Self-Evaluation Report (p. 21), the Academy plans to develop e-learning and distance learning. The continuation of this process and implementation is highly encouraged by the committee.

<b>5.5. REQUIREMENT: The students are provided with dormitories and medical service.</b>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>APA has a hostel with a total area of 4423.6 m<sup>2</sup> and 349 beds; free Wi-Fi is available for students. Since many of the students are seconded by public administration, many do not need a place in the dormitory.</p> <p>Medical services are not available in the Academy. However, it should be stated that most of the students on the programme are studying part time, and therefore the University informed that those students have, in fact, no real need for medical service provided by the institution.</p> <p>The Committee is of the opinion that the requirement established by the state in terms of having a dormitory for <i>all</i> the students is superfluous and too expensive and should be revisited, since many students have their own abode. Instead of having its own dormitory, it could be considered to cooperate with other real-estate offices and proprietors offering accommodation. So is the requirement regarding the provision of medical service – it is outdated, too expensive, not efficient, and therefore too much a burden on small institutions and programmes with low funding.</p>	
<b>5.6. REQUIREMENT: A library supports the conduct of studies ensuring that up-to-date information sources are available, and provides students with the opportunities for independent work.</b>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The library is available and has study places for independent work. The library also provides access to electronic sources, however not to all internationally relevant sources. The books in the library are limited and specifically international English publications are scarce and haphazard.</p>	